

Congressional Hispanic Caucus

United States Congress

Washington, DC 20515

CHAIRWOMAN

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

12TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

April 1, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

On behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), we urge you to approve the National Hispanic Media Coalition's (NHMC) request to initiate a formal inquiry into the extent, nature and effects of hate speech, and to search for possible ways to counteract or reduce its negative impacts.

Hate speech proliferates across telecommunications and the media, and causes obvious harm to our society. The horrific actions of the past year indicate a need for government intervention on this issue. The Minutemen leader Shawna Forde brutally murdered a nine-year old Hispanic girl and her father in Arivaca, Arizona. Scott Roeder assassinated Dr. George Tiller as he served as an usher during service at his church. And known-white supremacist James von Brunn killed an African American security guard at Washington, D.C.'s Holocaust Museum. Although the Constitution protects speech that many would find repugnant, we cannot help but assume that hateful language spoken on the public airways at least partially motivated these crimes.

As demonstrated by these appalling crimes, and NHMC's Petition for Inquiry, hate speech not only affects Latinos, but also women, African Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, Muslims, Jews, Catholics, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and Caucasian Americans.

We observe that hate speech is prevalent on cable television, the radio, and the Internet, given the examples named above and the rise in anti-Hispanic hate crimes concurrent with the immigration debate and the current economic crisis. As you know, President Obama recently enacted the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act as part of the National Defense Authorization Bill. The measure extends federal hate crimes law to include crimes motivated by a victim's gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. However, a further inquiry into the extent, nature and effects of hate speech is necessary to understand and prevent the correlation between hate speech and hate crimes.

We request that you open a docket to allow for comment and the collect of data and information regarding hate speech. In doing so, the FCC will allow citizens to comment on the hate speech

in their communities in an accessible and transparent forum, raise awareness about the depth and impact of hate speech in the media, and help the government and the public begin to understand the root of hate crimes. We are confident that the results of this inquiry will lead to a better understanding of the current situation and provide options on how to reduce the negative effects of hate speech.

Sincerely,



Nydia Velázquez
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Silvestre Reyes
Co-Chair
Communications, Technology
and the Arts Task Force



Joe Baca
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